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ABSTRACT

Old Order Amish are readily distinguishable from others in society by their dissociation from "modern" convenience and dress. Students in an Old Order Amish school in Iowa receive instruction in language arts from a secular basal language arts workbook, and a basal reader containing biblical stories. Comprehension of content is evaluated from completed exercises contained in the basal reader and workbook. Pupils in grades 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8, completed the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. Eighteen of 23 students ranked below the 50th percentile in vocabulary, whereas only 12 of 23 ranked below the 50th percentile in reading. All students ranked above the 50th percentile in arithmetic computation. Since the Amish philosophy and culture emphasize hard work, self-reliance, and practical situations, the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills might not be a valid measure for these pupils. The high math results indicate its applicability in the practical day-to-day living of the Amish, while the vocabulary and reading tests evaluate concepts that may be culturally unfamiliar. (HTH)

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VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT, READING, AND OLD ORDER AMISH PUPILS

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VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT, READING, AND OLD ORDER AMISH PUPILS

The Old Order Amish are readily distinguishable from others in society. They utilize horse-drawn farm machinery rather than tractors and self-propelled combines with power steering and hydraulic lifts. Horses and buggies are utilized in their home community for transportation instead of automobiles. For more distant travel, bus and train service is purchased.

Old Order Amish men wear beards without mustaches. All wear suspenders with plain-colored shirts and trousers. Amish women wear prayer caps continuously. Sleeve length of dresses generally extends to the wrists. The length of the dresses extends to the ankles with high necklines. Checks, stripes, and bright colors are not permitted in Amish clothing. Black is a favorite color in clothing. Amish men frequently wear black broad-brimmed hats and black coats, while Amish women wear black bonnets and capes.

Modern conveniences, such as automatic dishwashers, electric ranges, dryers, clothes washers, radio, and television are definitely frowned upon in Old Order Amish culture. In Amish parochial schools, there are no electrical outlets. Thus, audio-visual aids are not utilized in the classroom. An outdoor pump is utilized to pump water by hand. Outdoor toilets, a barn to house horses, and buggies also are in evidence on the schoolgrounds. Swings, a merry-go-round, and a teeter-totter provide playground equipment for Old Order Amish pupils. With the utilization of horse-drawn farm equipment, a lack of modern conveniences in the home and school, Amish generally believe "In the sweat of thy brow, thou shalt eat bread."

Eighth grade education is terminal for Old Order Amish pupils. These pupils are generally taught by teachers who also have completed the eighth grade and adhere to fundamental tenets of the Old Order Amish faith.

Old Order Amish Pupils and the Language Arts

The writer, covering a three year period, has visited Pleasant Hill School, an Old Order Amish school near Bloomfield, Iowa. Other Amish schools have also been visited at selected intervals.

In visiting Pleasant Hill School, one has to admire diligence in studying exhibited by pupils. Assignments for pupils in diverse curriculum areas are generally written on the chalkboard. A short introduction may also be presented by the teacher to pupils in a new lesson. Thus, the Old Order Amish teachers may introduce a model from a basal language arts textbook pertaining to writing business letters. The introduction consists of reading orally to pupils each section of a business letter, e.g., heading, inside address, greeting, body, closing, and signature. An assignment is then made by the teacher for pupils to write a business letter.

Each completed assignment is evaluated by the teacher involving pupil recitation. Learners may then acquire new content from time devoted to evaluation. A basal secular language arts workbook, Language Roundup, published by McCormick Mathers, is utilized to teach pupils listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. The basal reader utilized is entitled Stories About God's People published by Rod and Staff Publishers of Crockett, Kentucky. Biblical stories are contained in these readers. Diverse reading skills for pupils are emphasized in the basal reader, as well as in the related workbook. Thus, comprehension of content by pupils is evaluated from completed exercises contained in the basal reader and workbook. Diverse exercises pertaining to word attack skills (phonic analysis, syllabication, structural analysis, context clues, and configuration clues) are also inherent in the basal text and workbook. Content in Stories About God's People is read

orally by pupils to evaluate progress in word recognition.

The balance of this paper will report standardized test score results of Old Order Amish pupils in Pleasant Hill School, located near Bloomfield, Iowa.

Standardized Test Scores

Six third grade pupils scored the following results in vocabulary and reading on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (administered February, 1980):

	Vocabulary*		Reading	
	GE	PR	GE	PR
Pupil one	3.4	47	4.8	82
Pupil two	3.1	39	3.1	39
Pupil three	1.8	10	2.1	12
Pupil four	1.4	4	1.8	6
Pupil five	3.6	53	2.8	30
Pupil six	2.8	31	3.5	51

In ascending order in percentile rank, six Old Order Amish pupils scored PR's of 4, 10, 31, 39, 47, and 53 in vocabulary development. Generally, these same pupils scored consistently higher in reading with percentile ranks of 6, 12, 30, 39, 51, and 82. There were two exceptions, however. Pupil two had a percentile rank of 39 on both vocabulary development and reading, whereas pupil five had a percentile rank of 53 in vocabulary and 30 in reading.

Seven fourth grade pupils revealed the following results in vocabulary and reading, according to the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (administered February, 1980):

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* GE equals grade equivalent; PR equals percentile rank.

	Vocabulary		Reading	
	GE	PR	GE	PR
Pupil one	4.2	43	4.7	56
Pupil two	2.4	8	3.7	31
Pupil three	3.0	17	3.0	16
Pupil four	3.1	19	3.7	31
Pupil five	4.2	43	6.2	86
Pupil six	5.2	69	4.4	48
Pupil seven	4.0	38	4.0	39

In ascending order in percentile rank, seven fourth grade Old Order Amish pupils had the following PR's in vocabulary: 8, 17, 19, 38, 43, 43, and 69. In reading achievement in ascending order of percentile ranks, these seven pupils scored 16, 31, 31, 39, 48, 56, and 86. Generally, the percentile rank achievement was higher for each pupil in reading as compared to vocabulary development with two exceptions. Pupil three scored a percentile rank of 17 in vocabulary and 16 in reading. Pupil six revealed a percentile rank of 69 in vocabulary and 48 in reading.

Five sixth grade pupils revealed the following Iowa Test of Basic Skills results in vocabulary and reading:

	Vocabulary		Reading	
	GE	PR	GE	PR
Pupil one	5.3	27	5.8	36
Pupil two	5.9	38	7.2	63
Pupil three	6.8	56	7.0	60
Pupil four	4.9	21	5.9	38
Pupil five	6.0	40	6.9	58

In ascending order of achievement in percentile rank, these five sixth grade pupils achieved PR's of 21, 27, 38, 40, and 56 in vocabulary development. In reading, sequential percentile ranks of Old Order Amish pupils in ascending order were 36, 38, 58, 60, and 63. Each sixth grade pupil achieved higher in

reading as compared to vocabulary development.

Three seventh grade pupils revealed the following results in vocabulary and reading, according to the Iowa Test of Basic Skills:

	Vocabulary		Reading	
	GE	PR	GE	PR
Pupil one	6.6	34	7.7	54
Pupil two	5.5	18	5.6	20
Pupil three	3.9	4	3.7	2

In ascending order in percentile rank, three Old Order Amish seventh grade pupils achieved the following in vocabulary development: 4, 18, and 34 as compared to 2, 20, and 54 in reading. Pupil one scored substantially higher in reading (PR = 54) as compared to vocabulary development (PR = 34). Pupil two had a percentile rank of 20 in reading and 18 in vocabulary, whereas pupil three was slightly higher in vocabulary (PR = 4) as compared to reading (PR = 2).

Two eighth grade pupils achieved the following in vocabulary and reading, according to the Iowa Test of Basic Skills:

	Vocabulary		Reading	
	GE	PR	GE	PR
Pupil one	9.5	68	9.3	65
Pupil two	9.5	68	10.0	77

Both pupils acquired a percentile rank of 68 in vocabulary; ascending order percentile ranks in reading were 65 and 77.

Summary Statements

Eighteen of twenty-three Old Order Amish pupils ranked below the fiftieth percentile in vocabulary, whereas twelve of twenty-three pupils ranked below a percentile rank of fifty in reading.

Old Order Amish philosophy does not emphasize theorizing in the curriculum of life. Thus, for example, Darwinian theory pertaining to evolution is strictly taboo in the school and home setting. As a further example, Old Order Amish do not agree with "book farming" such as using recommendations pertaining to agriculture coming from experimental stations at state land grant colleges and universities. Rather, practical situations in life are significant, such as concrete farming situations in rural areas. The writer listened to a definition of social security in an Old Order Amish classroom. The Amish teacher avoided the concept by saying, "We Amish do not believe in social security." The Old Order Amish, of course, do not pay money into social security, nor do they want old age and survivor's insurance from the federal government. In general, many secular vocabulary terms receive limited emphasis in the classroom setting. Within the framework of basal textbooks and workbooks, Old Order Amish pupils acquire and attach meaning to selected vocabulary terms.

Achievement of Old Order Amish pupils ranked considerably higher in reading as compared to vocabulary development. Eleven of twenty-three pupils ranked above the fiftieth percentile in reading as compared to five of twenty-three pupils ranking above the fiftieth percentile in vocabulary.

One may safely say that the vocabulary and reading sections of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills might not be valid for Old Order Amish pupils. Amish philosophy and culture are quite different from others in society. Modernism as a concept is not approved of by Old Order Amish. Thus, a lack of modern means of farming, transportation, and communication is in evidence. Amish philosophy stresses hard work, self-reliance, and practical situations in the curriculum of life.

Old Order Amish pupils revealed high Iowa Test of Basic Skills results

in arithmetic computation. Thus, all twenty-three pupils at Pleasant Hill School ranked above the fiftieth percentile in arithmetic computation. The Silver Burdette series of mathematics textbooks provide the majority of sequential learnings for pupils. In degrees, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills might be quite valid to measure Amish pupil achievement in arithmetic. Old Order Amish pupils may perceive a high degree of purpose in arithmetic; farm operations are heavily dependent upon the use of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.